

# HANDOUT: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION: PERFORMANCES

Writing a script is the essential first step in creating a performance. It will guide how you structure your acting, props, and costumes. Below are some tips for beginning to write your script.

## Quick Tips for Writing Scripts:

- **Identify the key information first.** Find the quotes, speeches, characters etc. that you know you must include and work the performance around these.
- **Balance drama with historical evidence.** Using quotes, speeches, or excerpts from sources like newspapers can be an excellent way to incorporate evidence and detail that a great performance requires.
- **Prepare a performance.** Don't prepare an oral report that simply states facts. You need characters to come alive and interact with each other and the audience. Try to engage the audience by asking questions or creating dramatic scenes.
- **Choose the type of voice you want to use.** You can use first person and third person perspectives to tell your story. In some cases you may want to use both to convey your points.
- **Choosing characters.** Select characters that can tell the most in your story. Don't overcomplicate the storyline with too many.
- **Block.** As you write your script, include the actions and placement of your characters.
- **Avoid clutter.** Too many props, costumes, or characters will overwhelm your performance.
- **Length.** Scripts are usually 4-5 pages.
- **Your research is still central.** You want each piece to tie back to your main argument and thesis.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** You won't use your scripts on stage, so make sure to practice your performance.

## WORKSHEET: PLANNING YOUR PERFORMANCE

By their very nature, performances are the most creative History Day category. It's impossible to give you a formula for a successful performance. They can take many different formats and will vary based on the number of people, characters, scenarios, and topic. Below are two tools to help you begin brainstorming your performance. Keep in mind that these are not the only successful approaches to the performance category – just a place to get started. Be creative!

<b>DRAFTING YOUR SCRIPT</b>	
What	Key Questions and Elements
<b>Intro</b> (1 minute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set the scene.</li> <li>Who are you? When is this taking place? Where are you?</li> <li>Introduce your thesis.</li> </ul>
<b>Historical Context/ Background</b> (2 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What happened before your topic to influence it?</li> <li>Were there other movements, people, or ideas that influenced it?</li> <li>What events led up to the topic?</li> </ul>
<b>Heart of Story</b> (3 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key events and issues related to your topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Short and Long-term Impacts</b> (3 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the immediate outcomes of your topic?</li> <li>What has been the long-term significance of your topic in history?</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion/ Wrap-up</b> (1 minute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce your thesis.</li> <li>Conclude your characters actions.</li> </ul>

<b>SCENARIO BRAINSTORM</b>
Brainstorm at least two different scenarios using different characters in each. Which one is the best approach for presenting your ideas?
<b>Scenario 1</b>
Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators): _____
Setting: _____
Timeframe: _____
Describe Scenario: _____
_____
_____
_____
<b>Scenario 2</b>
Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators): _____
Setting: _____
Timeframe: _____
Describe Scenario: _____
_____
_____
_____

**What Would Your Character Know?**

When selecting characters for your performance, think about what they would or wouldn't know. If your character is Abraham Lincoln, it's impossible for him to know what happened in 1870 because he was assassinated in 1865. Sometimes selecting a different character – maybe someone who wasn't a major player – gives you the chance to take a step back and discuss your topic's significance in history in a different way. Instead of Abraham Lincoln, one of his advisors or aides who lived after his death would give you a more long-term perspective on Lincoln's presidency.

# SAMPLE: "QUEEN OF THE REDS: THE REBELLION OF EMMA GOLDMAN" SCRIPT OUTLINE

- i. Introduction (time and situation)
  1. Overview of anarchy, life as anarchist
  2. Brief anarchist beliefs, background in Russia
  
- ii. Becoming a famous anarchist
  1. Black Friday
    - a. Details of event
    - b. Leading to Goldman's anarchy
  2. Deportation
    - a. From United States
      - i. Newspaper articles
      - ii. Speech from 1919
  
- iii. Anarchist influences
  1. Johann Most
    - a. Introduction
    - b. Challenging Most's beliefs
      - i. Attacking with horsewhip
  2. Alexander Berkman
    - a. Introduction
    - b. Assassination attempt on Frick
  
- iv. Anarchist Independence
  1. Assassination of President McKinley
    - a. No support from Berkman, others
    - b. Stand up for personal beliefs
  
- v. Conclusion
  1. Influence of anarchist men
  2. Vision for an anarchist future

# SAMPLE: QUEEN OF THE REDS: THE REBELLION OF EMMA GOLDMAN. 1996 HISTORY DAY, "TAKING A STAND IN HISTORY"

**Bold:** Primary source quotes

[Words in brackets]: Blocking on stage

Line between paragraphs: Denotes new section

*(Setting: Barcelona hotel room, 1939)*

No, no Mr. Newspaperman! I do not have time for you now. My train leaves Barcelona in [look at watch]... well, I suppose I have a few moments. Do you mind if I pack while I talk? All right then.

[Start unpacking drawers] So, you want to speak to the infamous Red Emma Goldman, do you? There is a lot for me to tell. I am a radical, and an anarchist – a person who believes in the absence of laws in society, in case you were not certain. And I am not ashamed of it! Everything I have ever done has been against government and for anarchy. I reason, why should I, or anyone else, be forced to kneel before laws, when I could be free to love, to be creative, to be independent, if governed by my own self. It was by that that I lived and spoke, from the moment I escaped the dictatorship of my unloving parents in Russia, to the moment I am now speaking to you. [Find handkerchief while unpacking]

If you want a scrap of history from my life, this is one of the most important reminders. The tears I shed on Black Friday, November 11, 1887, still stain this handkerchief. I have left them there these 52 years to remind myself and others of the bravery of the men butchered that day, and of the legacy they left behind for me to carry out. [Sit down] There were eight of them, anarchists all, who were speaking peacefully in Haymarket Square when a bomb was thrown, and of course the first people the government blamed were the anarchists. All they were trying to do was speak! Their constitutional right, or so it was supposed to be. But the government did not listen, and eventually four of them were hung on Black Friday. I cannot understand how the government can deny them this right they claim to grant to every American citizen, except for peaceful anarchists, I suppose. [Stand up, pack handkerchief]

So, an anarchist I became, devoted to eliminating the silencing laws. And I am still fighting. It is for anarchy that today I am going to Canada. I am going to raise money for some Italian anarchists. I cannot go to Italy because I was banned from there, just as I was once banished and deported from the United States. They were always looking for a way to get me out of the county, so on December 22, 1919, they sent me and 248 other anarchists to Russia, to be rid of the only people who truly understood the atrocities of the government. [Find articles in drawers, put on glasses] These are some articles that I saved that went out of their way to slay us; perhaps one of them is from your newspaper. The Cleveland Plain Dealer: **"It is hoped, and expected, that many more vessels, larger, more commodious, carrying similar cargo, will follow in her wake."** The St. Paul Pioneer Press: "Banished Reds Curse America." I did not curse America. In fact, I warned them of the inevitable turning of events. [Put down cane, straighten up, take two steps forward, as if going back in time to a younger Emma] **This government has signed its death warrant with these deportations. This is the beginning of the end of the United States government, but I will not stop my work as long as life rests with me.** [Slouch, step back, pick up cane, go back to older Emma] That was a long time ago; twenty years only, but it seems more like a century.

But I am off the subject and we have so little time. Now, everyone knows that the government is run by men, and oh, if I have not had problems with them both. [Find picture of Johann Most] This is one of the most important men in my new life in America, Johann Most. Aye, he was a homely man, but a brilliant speaker who taught me to speak just like him to the very souls of my comrades. [Pack picture of Johann] But one night, as I was giving a speech for Johann in Cleveland, urging the futility of the struggle for the eight-hour work day, an elderly man brought to my attention how useless my argument was. And I realized that I was nothing but a creation of Johann's, speaking only what he told me to speak. I knew that if I were to be a true anarchist, I must speak with what came from my own heart. When I approached Johann about this, he flew into a rage and shouted at me, **"Whoever is not with me is against me – I will not have it otherwise!"** Now you would expect a tiny, 21-year-old girl to shrink back in fear and obedience. But you are speaking to Emma Goldman! **And I told him I would not repeat his beliefs, I would not fall into the slavery of marriage, and I would not advocate violence as a**

**method for reinforcing my beliefs.** Ironically, the one time I was forced to use violence to reinforce my beliefs was against Johann. In front of a crowd Johann verbally attacked my dear friend Alexander Berkman, my own dear Sasha, for a crime that Sasha had committed in the name of anarchy. And I, enraged that anyone should dare to slay Alexander's name, leapt onto that stage and attacked Johann with a horsewhip, and cracked it over my knee. [Pretend to crack cane over knee] I will not allow anyone to slay me or my partner, whether it is the government or the man who gave me my start.

Then there is my Sasha, my anarchist partner until his death three years ago. [Find Sasha's picture] Together we fought the evils of law and brought many new lost souls to the beauty of anarchy. Our greatest stand against authoritative unfairness was when he sought to murder the industrialist Henry Clay Frick, who in collaboration with Andrew Carnegie sought to initiate and 18 percent wage cut – 18 percent! – to the workers of the Carnegie Steel Company. The Homestead Strike incited from this, and the union was destroyed. [Pack picture of Sasha] We felt it was our duty to these people to do away with Frick. Sasha shot him twice but Frick did not die, and Sasha was sentenced to prison for his pains, 21 years. [Find letters in drawer] These letters are a painful reminder of the nine years he spent in prison, and a painful journal of the one time I was forced to turn my back on my partner for something I believed in. [Sit down with letters]

You are probably too young to remember the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, but it is fresh in my mind, as is the sad face of his assassin, a young Polish man named Leon Czolgosz. Leon was an aspiring anarchist, listened to my speeches religiously, occasionally offering his own interpretation. He did what he thought he had to do for the good of the people, and how was I to turn my back on him when my own Sasha had committed the same sort of violence. [Stand up, pack letters] Sasha, from where he waited in prison, wrote that he felt it not to be a proper stand against the government; he and my fellow anarchists felt that the assassination had done the movement more harm than good. So there I was, caught between my partner and fellow anarchists, and my true opinions and beliefs, frustrated, confused as to where I should go. But my dedication to my cause overrides everyone and everything, and I chose to stand by him and offer him the support of a woman who understands the need to do what one thinks is right.

But now they are all gone, and I am alone. Do you see what the men in my life have done to me? They have angered me, inspired me, challenged me, into living and breathing my cause so that it will never leave me, even when society says that a seven-decade old woman should be planting flowers and doing cross-stitch. Never will you find Emma Goldman in idle retirement. My body is old, but my heart is still young with the hope for a peaceful society.

Now I am all done and you must go. I have many more stories to tell you, but you could not fill your whole newspaper with all of my protests and riots. But just remember this – one day the Queen of the Reds will be victorious in banishing government and establishing a society without laws, without war, and at peace.



# PERFORMANCE SCENE SELECTION

Using your thesis and your Performance Idea Map, think about the scenes that you might include in your performance. You can have additional scenes or fewer scenes depending on your topic—there's no magical number of scenes.

Remember: each scene change should have a purpose, such as when you change characters, time periods, or point of view. Too many scene changes takes up a lot of time and can confuse the audience. Fewer scenes is often better!

To pick the scenes for your performance, look for:

- Moments of conflict or high emotion that are exciting for the audience.
- Times when you can explain different points of view.
- An opportunity to “take a step back” and look at the topic from a bigger perspective. Often this will be your opportunity to talk about the long-term impact of your topic in history and the legacy it has left. Sometimes a narrator works for this purpose, but is there an interesting scene or “hook” you could use instead?

## Scene 1

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

What's going on? \_\_\_\_\_

What parts of your idea map can the character(s) discuss in this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

## Scene 2

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

What's going on? \_\_\_\_\_

What parts of your idea map can the character(s) discuss in this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

## Scene 3

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

What's going on? \_\_\_\_\_

What parts of your idea map can the character(s) discuss in this scene? \_\_\_\_\_